

► Fred Meyer fueling center opens in Multnomah



– Page 6

► Get in the swim during Spring Break at the Southwest Community Center at Gabriel Park. Lots more things to do this month on Page 7.



► MJCC has everything for the young at heart



– Page 4

The Southwest Portland Post

Volume No. 23 Issue No. 5

www.swportlandpost.com

Portland, Oregon

Complimentary

March 2015

Multnomah neighbors discuss the future at land use planning forum

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

On Feb. 10, approximately 150 neighbors, community leaders, and city staff attended a village forum in the Multnomah Arts Center auditorium, to see what was planned for Multnomah for the next 20 years.

The auditorium's rich walnut molding, red velvet curtain, and old light fixtures bring back an era when people gathered to discuss town hall issues.

The topics were as thick as the smoke that used to prevail: mixed-use zoning; corner lot development rules; demolitions; neighborhood centers versus corridors; and land use rules.

The proposed draft of the Portland Comprehensive Plan is also under review by the Planning and Sustainability Commission. The plan proposes land use changes for a number of properties across the city.

What does it all mean and how can

the Portland Comprehensive Plan make sense to the people it matters to most?

Carol McCarthy, the new chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, explained that the number one by-law for neighborhood associations is citizen involvement.

"You have a very strong role on this plan," she began, "whether you live or have a business within the neighborhood borders."

Jim Peterson, Multnomah land use chair, explained four main zoning component's plans: dispersed, mixed use, civic corridor, and urban center.

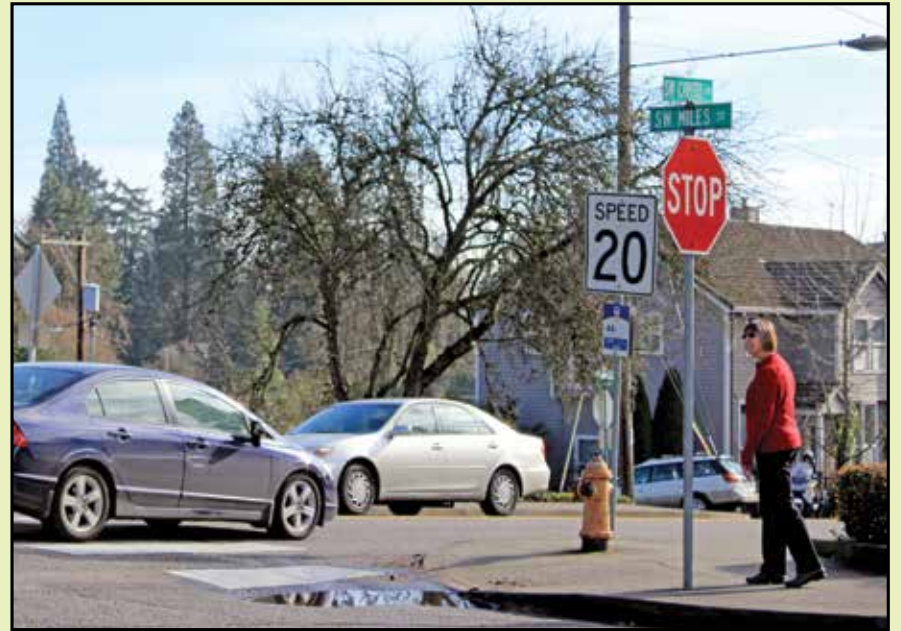
"It's possible that this area is going to be just like Southeast Division Street," Peterson warned.

He described how that neighborhood have torn down older buildings and replaced them with tall residential units with retailers on bottom floors.

"It's going to destroy the character of the neighborhood," Peterson said. "The city wants the village to be a center full

(Continued on Page 6)

Crosswalk Enforcement



Sharon White of the Portland Bureau of Transportation acts as a pedestrian decoy during a crosswalk enforcement action at Southwest Capitol Highway and Miles Street on Jan. 28. In close proximity to West Hills Preschool, and stops for TriMet and public school buses, the intersection is frequently used by area families with children. (Photo by Felicity J. Mackay, Portland Bureau of Transportation)

Proposed light rail tunnels could take passengers to Hillsdale, Marquam Hill



Alternate routes are under study for high capacity transit, either bus or rail, from downtown Portland to Tualatin. (Map courtesy of Metro)

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

By Janet Goetze
The Southwest Portland Post

To tunnel or not to tunnel. That's one of the questions a steering committee for the Southwest Corridor Plan will consider over the next four months.

In 2009, the Metro Council selected the Southwest Corridor, from downtown Portland through Southwest neighborhoods to Tualatin, for "high capacity transit," whether light rail or bus rapid transit.

In addition to bus or rail, the developing plan will include road, bike, sidewalk and trail planning to increase travel safety in an area where the population continues to grow along with traffic congestion.

The steering committee is made up of elected officials from cities and counties plus TriMet, Metro and the Oregon Department of Transportation representatives.

By July, the steering committee is expected to decide if one or another light rail tunnel should be part of a plan to be completed in May 2016.

One tunnel would be under Marquam Hill with a stop to take rail passengers by elevator to Oregon Health & Science University. Another stop would be in Hillsdale, with the tunnel continuing to Barbur Boulevard.

Another shallower tunnel would be under Hillsdale with a town center stop. It would be part of a rail loop traveling west from 99W along Southwest Capitol Highway then going underground near the town center, under the Rieke Elementary School field, and rising again along Bertha Boulevard.

A tunnel could increase the cost of the transportation project by an estimated \$1 billion, said Matt Binh, a Metro senior transportation planner. A preliminary estimate of the project's cost is about \$1.3 billion without a tunnel, he said, but updated cost estimates are expected in April.

The idea of a tunnel in the final plan has supporters and detractors among residents, business people and those traveling to or from OHSU or Portland Community College's Sylvania campus, he said.

At a February meeting in Hillsdale, some residents along a tunnel alignment learned of the proposal for the first time and were concerned they could be subjected to noise during and after construction.

Chris Reid, a commercial property owner, spoke for the Hillsdale Business & Professional Association in favoring buses rather than tunnels, which she said could divert people away from the commercial district. Reid said she was asked to speak for the association by president Mike Roach.

Don Baack, chairman of the Hillsdale transportation committee, said he is awaiting more study of the tunnel proposals before deciding if he favors either one.

His major concern, Baack said, is (Continued on Page 6)

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Letters to the Editor



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Lower prices will increase sales at Food Front

Regarding, "Local grocery co-op seeks national advice to bolster business," by Janet Goetz, *The Post*, February 2015.

I read with interest that Food Front is

hiring a consultant to try and increase business. I joined the co-op and paid a full membership the first month they opened.

A year later I withdrew my money. The selection of food, especially in the meat department, is inconsistent, but, more importantly, they are simply too expensive. A co-op should not have prices that are higher than New Seasons, higher even than Whole Foods.

Give members a 10 to 15 percent discount or more across the board and they will see membership pick up. Right now Food Front is simply a health food "convenience store" with the sort of prices you would expect at a 7-Eleven of health food.

They need to make economic sense as well as health sense to have any niche at all. It isn't rocket science.

Eleanor Alice

Post should observe 'media moratorium' on news coverage of teen suicide

Regarding "Wilson High School sophomore dies in hospital after home suicide attempt," by Don Snedecor, *The Post*, January 2015.

I was surprised and disappointed to see the article about Shea Sims in the January issue. I thought that the Southwest Post honored the same "media moratorium" on news coverage of teen suicides that the other media honor.

This incredible sensitivity by the media helps reduce the number of suicides by not glamorizing or sensationalizing the act of suicide. I hope you will rethink your future coverage of these unfortunate events and make the health of all teens the higher priority.

Carole Schmidt Davis

Editor's Note: Thank you for your letter, Carole. After hearing about the candlelight vigil for Shea Sims on Dec. 19, we went out of our way to report this tragedy in a sensitive manner. We observed national media guidelines for suicide reporting, including keeping this off the front page, quoting official sources, focusing on the mental health aspects, and providing contact information for those people impacted, as recommended. Hopefully our reporting reflected what was happening in the community and helped provide some context. - Don Snedecor

Reader discovers public parking; signs needed in Multnomah Village

Regarding, "NO PARKING: Are parking problems in Multnomah Village real or perceived?" by Erik Vidstrand, *The Post*, February 2015.

I was shocked to find out in your Multnomah Village parking exposé that there is parking by the Multnomah Arts Center. I have lived here 15 years and never found it.

The "Public Parking" sign is small and is not readable from Capitol Highway. At the bottom of the parking dungeon there is no sign that details where the bottom exit goes.

There are no other signs in the village that mentions that there is public parking anywhere.

I think we would all like to work together to remedy the parking issues in the village, but certainly communication should be on the top of the list.

Kenneth A. Boehlke
Southwest 27th Avenue

The Post welcomes reader response. Send letters or commentary to: Editor, The Southwest Portland Post, 4207 SE Woodstock Blvd #509, Portland, OR 97206. Fax (866-727-5336) or email editor@multnomahpost.com.




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Printing.....Oregon Lithoprint
Circulation.....Ambling Bear

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The Post has a circulation of 7,000 in Multnomah Village and the surrounding neighborhood business districts including Burlingame, Capitol Hill, Garden Home, Glen Cullen, Hillsdale, South Portland, Raleigh Hills, West Portland and Vermont Hills. The Post is published on or about the 1st of every month. Subscriptions are \$24 per year. Back issues are \$2.50 each when available. All major credit cards accepted.



The Post is printed on recycled newsprint using soy-based inks.

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Hillsdale NET leader is looking for volunteers to help during emergencies

By Janet Goetze
The Southwest Portland Post

Lisa DeGraaf is looking for more good people to help their neighbors in times of emergency. In January, she became head of the Hillsdale Neighborhood Emergency Team and Brett Matthews joined her as associate team leader.

Volunteers throughout the city may join neighborhood teams, which are trained by the Portland Bureau of Emergency Services to aid their own families and neighbors in case of a severe winter storm, flood, major earthquake or other disaster.

A new concern for Hillsdale is wildfire. Last September, sparks from a downed electrical wire ignited dry brush near Terwilliger Parkway and Capitol Highway, sending flames up the hillside and smoke throughout the area.

The Fire Bureau doused the flames fairly rapidly, but Glenn Bridger, who lives in a *cul de sac* where smoke drifted, brought the question of fire danger to the Hillsdale Alliance earlier this year. The Alliance includes representatives of several neighborhood organizations who meet quarterly to discuss issues important to Hillsdale.

With much of the neighborhood developed on hillsides with thick brush, temperatures gradually rising and *culs de sac* without escape routes, Alliance representatives agreed that residents need more information about

how to protect themselves from fire.

DeGraaf talked to staff at the Fire Bureau's Station 5 and learned a video and other information are available for residents. In addition, she said, the bureau has specially trained mobile wildfire units to fight blazes like the one Hillsdale saw last September.

Bureau personnel also can advise residents on creating "defensible space" around their homes. This means moving flammable material such as firewood, tree limbs, recreational vehicles and boats away from the house. Fire-resistant roofs, siding and decks also are advised.

After pointing out to firefighters that residents need safety information, DeGraaf said, "It's on their radar, and they are ramping up a bit of their outreach."

The Hillsdale NET, she said, will follow up and add information about emergency teams at the Hillsdale Farmer's Market and other gatherings.

DeGraaf joined Hillsdale's team after reading about the program in a newspaper article more than a year ago. She took the 30-hour training course which includes first aid, radios and communication, and search and rescue of people in collapsed buildings.

In the training, she also learned how the Bureau of Emergency Services, the Fire Bureau and other agencies communicate and coordinate activities during emergencies.

Techniques for safely rescuing



On Sept. 11, 2014, crews from Portland Fire Bureau's Station 5 responded to a wildfire on Southwest Capitol Highway near Terwilliger Boulevard. (Photo courtesy of Portland Fire & Rescue)

people or putting out a fire are part of the training to protect volunteers, she added.

"You don't put yourself in danger," she said, because an injured volunteer couldn't help neighbors.

Volunteers who successfully complete the initial training are required to volunteer a total of 12 hours a year to remain team members.

The hours could include taking new classes or participating in outreach activities, DeGraaf said, as well as attending volunteers' informational

meetings.

"We all share information," she said. "It's a communal type of program."

DeGraaf lived in Milwaukie before moving to Hillsdale about four years ago. However, she previously lived in Colorado where wildfires, she said, "always are an issue."

"Because it's green and lush, you think wildfires wouldn't be a concern here," she said. "But that's not true anymore." NET information is available at this website: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/pbem/31667>.

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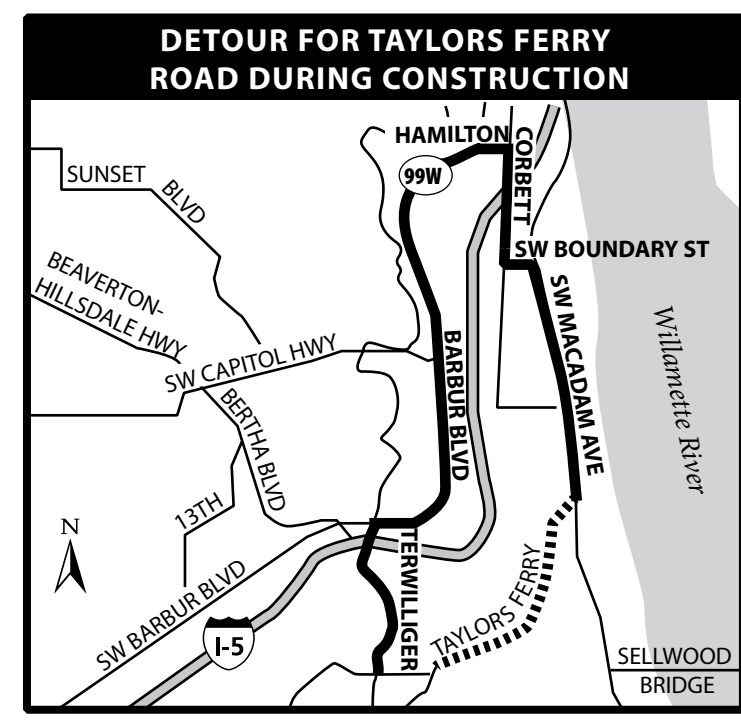
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Everyone's invited for arts, culture and recreation at MJCC

By KC Cowan
The Southwest Portland Post

The Mittleman Jewish Community Center has been a prominent feature along Southwest Capitol Highway ever since it opened in 1971. Its roots in Portland as an organization go back much further; last year it celebrated its 100th anniversary.

The MJCC houses a preschool and the Portland Jewish Academy, with classes through 8th grade. There's a full gymnasium, swimming pool, therapy pool, weight room, handball courts, and a covered soccer field. There's a cultural component as well, with lectures, classes and even the Jewish Community Orchestra.

And while all this provides a

core facility for Portland's Jewish community, Laurie Fendel, special events program manager at the MJCC, would like you to pay a little less attention to the word "Jewish" in the center's name, and more to the word "community."

"The thing is, this is a community center for all," Fendel said.

The original Jewish Community Center was once exclusively Jewish – created for Jews by Jews, because so many other clubs excluded them from membership.

Ironically, now that those prejudices are gone and Jews can join about any club they'd like to, the MJCC finds itself in a position of needing to "sell itself" a bit, to stay thriving. It wants to keep its roots firmly in the Jewish community, while offering a community center for

everyone to enjoy.

Part of Fendel's job is to come up with cultural programs to entice people to walk through the doors of a facility they may otherwise have thought you needed to be both Jewish and a member to enter.

A glance at the flyer for the first six months of 2015 includes activities and events at the MJCC that definitely are oriented to the Jewish faith, such as the "Friday Night Lights – Shabbat Across America," which will feature a dinner, music and entertainment, or the Purim Carnival, a traditional Jewish holiday celebration.

There are many more events, however, that have no connection at all to any religion. There's a monthly series for women exploring topics such as career transitions, money, and looking good at any age.

A used book sale is slated for March, as are performances by the White Bird Dance Company, and a lecture by a Peace Corps volunteer.

Many of the events are free, and others ask a nominal fee, but Fendel says the important thing is you don't have to be a member to attend. Everyone is welcome.

"I love to network with people, and bring in other organizations," Mendel says. "My job is really cultural arts. One

of the other programs I developed is called "Everything YAH," which means 'everything for the young at heart'."

"Everything YAH" will offer baby boomers classes and lectures on everything from the joy of downsizing, to living your later years to the fullest.

March is also Jewish Arts Month. Fendel, an artist herself, will display art created by members of Ora (Hebrew for "light"), Northwest Jewish artists.

(Continued on Page 6)



Laurie Fendel, special events program manager at MJCC, stands by one of her own works of art, a fiber hanging. (Post photo by KC Cowan)



The recent remodel of the MJCC lobby creates a comfortable space to have lunch or just enjoy art on display. (Post photo by KC Cowan)



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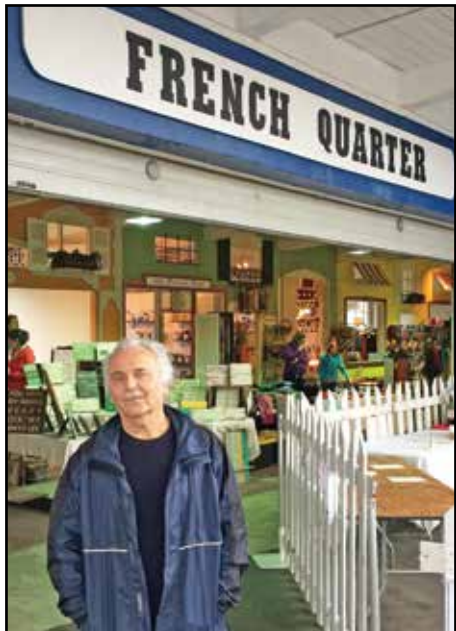
THE COUNTRY STORE

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

French Quarter boutique mall opens in Multnomah Village

Laissez les bon temps rouler. (Let the good times roll.) A new boutique mall is getting up and running in Multnomah Village.

Located at 3530 SW Multnomah Blvd, the French Quarter, so named



Yves Le Meitour is property owner of the new French Quarter boutique mall in Multnomah Village. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

after the famous boutique district in New Orleans, is the creative design of a father-daughter business team.

Yves Le Meitour, owner of the **Le Meitour Gallery**, and his daughter, Sara Le Meitour, the manager of the property, have grand plans for the former home of Keith's Automotive.

For two weekends in February, the Le Meitours kicked off the French Quarter by organizing a winter bazaar full of retail and food vendors.

"Our expectations were fully met," Yves shared. "All of the vendors were very happy and broke sales records."

Renner's Grill had a beer garden set up; a pizza food cart set up shop; and permanent and one-time vendors displayed their wares everything from jewelry and hats, to a kid's arts and crafts area.

The building resembles a small street in New Orleans complete with French street signs, balconies, shutters, and geraniums.

"This is just the beginning," Sara said showing off plans for the **Interstate Pizza Company**, a wood-oven pizza, which plans to open in May.

"They will be the anchor to the quarter," her father chimed in.

When asked about another wood-fired pizza place opening up the street about the same time, Yves grinned.

"Competition is healthy. I want people to meet, eat, and mingle," Yves said, "just like the village market in France where I'm from."

Other businesses to take up residency are **My Favorite Soap** which will feature handmade candles, lotions, laundry detergent, and of course soaps by owner Jean Marie.

Yusef, from Istanbul, Turkey, is selling

products from Turkey and Africa, things like tiled lanterns and plates under the name **Harmony Trade**.

Reverie Boutique sells jewelry, glasswork, and fused glass objects. Artist-owners, Jessica Lee and Matthew Rohrbaugh, said they are very excited to be in the French Quarter.

"So far, it's been a very vocal and focal area to gather," Rohrbaugh told *The Post*. "There's a good buzz about the place. Where else can you gather like this in the main part of the village?"

Yves is downsizing his gallery up on Capitol Highway. He's going to set up shop in a smaller space in the French Quarter and move out of the main one.

Yves' sparkling blue eyes were full of passion as both he and Sara discussed other possibilities: live music, year-around outdoor seating, fashion shows, films, flea markets, and estate sales.

"**Parson's Farm Stand** reopens in March which will complete the quarter," Yves said. "Look for us on our Facebook page: Multnomah Village French Quarter."

Bishops Barbershop opens in former Pagenwood building

The former Pagenwood building, in the heart of Multnomah Village, has a new life after being empty for years. Bishops Barbershop, known for inexpensive haircuts and a hip atmosphere, is now open for business.

Located at 7787 SW Capitol Hwy, Bishops is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

Kitty Foote, the franchise owner, said



Stylist Liz Fleming and manager Bri Crofoot pose for a photo at Bishops Barbershop. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

the village is perfect for a new Bishops location because it's walkable and accessible for residents throughout area.

They own two other franchise locations: Raleigh Hills and Bend. There are 12 other Bishops locations in the metro area including Hawthorne, Alberta, and the Pearl.

Manager Bri Crofoot said the owners were trying to locate in the village for the last five years.

"The property manager actually contacted us," Crofoot stated.

Bishops clients are taken on a walk-in only basis. A free bottle of a local brewed beer is offered to those who are 21 and older.

"We had a grand opening at the February First Friday," Crofoot said. "We were warmly welcomed."

(Continued on Page 6)

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Land Use Planning Forum

(Continued from Page 1)

of commercial/mixed-use properties; the MNA wants it to remain a corridor (with minimal development)."

"Portland is growing," commented Joan Frederiksen, one of the city staff who was positioned at their posts around maps of projects.

"It's important to protect the historic character of the downtown village," a longtime resident responded.

"It's not just about growth," Frederiksen replied. "It's about focused activities and providing the infrastructure for increased transportation modes."

The plan is proposed to add 1,200 more homes. Only zoning in the mixed-use zone could allow buildings up to 75 feet tall (six floors) and add 2,500 housing units.

Currently the core area of Multnomah Village has a D overlay. According to the city website on the comp plan, a D (design) overlay zone promotes the conservation, enhancement, and continued vitality with special scenic, architectural, or cultural value.

This is achieved through the creation of design districts and applying the design overlay zone as part of community planning projects. Infill development will be compatible with the neighborhood and enhance the area.

Demolitions were next up. Older homes in disrepair are being torn down and being replaced with much larger structures.

Claire Colman-Evans helped organize a grassroots organization concerned about demolitions.

"Demolition does not support sustainability," she stated. "Lead and asbestos dust is a major concern. And of course, if a home really needs to be torn down, we recommend deconstruction (taking the building apart piece by piece) and salvaging as much as possible."

Corner lot development was discussed next.

"There is a provision that folks didn't know about it," said Laura Wozniak, a conservation activist. "Subdivisions can happen on any corner lot and can add a high density with attached housing."

At the end of the forum, Randy Bonella discussed lack of sidewalks in the neighborhood and parking problems in the village.

"Write emails and demand sidewalks and funding for infrastructure," Bonella said. "It's a call to action."

The deadline to submit testimony and comments is March 13. There will be more opportunities in the fall also once the preliminary ideas are set in place.

For more information, please visit www.portlandoregon.gov/lps/mixeduse.

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR PLAN

(Continued from Page 1)

keeping the Hillsdale Town Center part of the corridor plan whether it proceeds with light rail or rapid transit bus.

While one proposal would create a loop along Capital Highway to Bertha Boulevard to include Hillsdale in the transit alignment, another would stay on Barbur Boulevard, bypassing the town center.

"If we don't have a station in Hillsdale," Baack said, "we become a backwater." That could affect businesses in the town center and, some residents have indicated, could affect housing desirability if the neighborhood isn't perceived as well served by public transit.

The steering committee won't make a decision but will discuss issues raised in Hillsdale and South Portland meetings on Monday, March 9 from 9-11 a.m. at the Tigard Public Library, 13500 SW Hall Blvd.

A decision on service to Marquam Hill, Hillsdale and Portland Community College's Sylvania campus is scheduled for July 13, location undetermined.

Arts and Culture at MJCC

(Continued from Page 4)

Ora was founded by two members of the MJCC who wanted to find support with other Jewish artists, and to exhibit and sell their art. Fendel will rotate the art weekly in the main lobby, to give as many artists as possible exposure.

Fendel's own work often uses Hebrew letters as a part of her fiber art, but she says the show will have art that will appeal to anyone. "So, all of the artists are Jewish, but the art that we produce doesn't necessarily have to be Jewish in its nature." The show is free and open to the public.

Of course, the MJCC also has athletic facilities, and you *do* need to be a member to access those. But again, being Jewish is not a prerequisite.

"We have a new promotion coming up: 'You don't have to be Jewish to join.' Everyone's welcome," Mendel said emphatically.

In 2007 the center completed a major renovation, improving existing locker rooms, exercise facilities, and the ballroom. It also opened up the lobby to create a café with a welcoming place to relax and socialize.

According to Fendel, all these changes give MJCC an edge over the competition.

"It's different than the other community centers around here," Fendel said. "We have Southwest Community Center [at Gabriel Park], and that's primarily all athletics; and then there's Multnomah Arts Center and they have arts and classes, but they don't have the athletics. So, we have it all."

And all you have to do, Fendel said, is walk through the doors to see.

Find out more about the Mittleman Jewish Community Center by visiting it online at www.oregonjcc.org, or just drop by. The center is located at 6651 SW Capitol Hwy in the Hillsdale neighborhood.

THE COUNTRY STORE

(Continued from Page 5)

Fred Meyer fuel center opens on Barbur Boulevard

Like bees to a hive, car after car entered the new Fred Meyer fueling center located at Southwest 24th Avenue and Barbur Boulevard on Feb. 20, opening day.

There was a mailer sent to neighbors, perhaps to quell the issues from opponents that were brought up last fall.

Residents met with corporate staff in September to discuss construction, traffic patterns, and lighting.

Melinda Merrill, a Fred Meyer community affairs manager, said there were concerns from some neighbors. "We worked with the neighborhood association to work out the hours of operation. We agreed to 6 a.m. - 11 p.m."



Nicole Sams, a home manager, was busy running from vehicle-to-vehicle pumping gas. "We have 18 employees and are collecting blankets this opening weekend for the mission downtown."

Customer Nancy Miller said she doesn't have to drive very far now to get her Fred Meyer gas.

"It's the only fuel center on the inner west-side," Merrill said. "Hillsboro is our next closest on the westside."

"I'm glad they're finally open as I like the price of this gas the most," Miller said as Sams filled up her car's tank.

Nearby residents involved with the negotiations said they want to wait and see if Fred Meyer will hold to all their agreements before commenting.

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COMMUNITY LIFE

By KC Cowan and Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

6 Meet the artists: The Multnomah Arts Center (7688 SW Capitol Hwy) will hold a reception for the artists of its March exhibit on Friday, March 6 at 7:00 pm. The show features figurative works by Isabel Deaver, Poppy Dully, Nancy Gillespie, Gail Simmons and Sue Svoboda. "Encountering the Figure" runs through March 31.

7 Metropolitan Youth Symphony will hold a community concert featuring Year Two Beginning Strings,

Vivaldi Strings, and Concert Orchestra on Saturday, March 7 at Lewis & Clark College, Evans Auditorium. Tickets Are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. To purchase tickets online or for more information visit the MYS website www.playmys.org.

Help plant a new garden: On Saturday, March 7, a work party to help create a new community garden for the Multnomah-Hillsdale area will take place at the Hillsdale Community Church, site of the proposed garden. The event is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the church, 6948 SW Capitol Highway. For more information contact Leslie Pohl-Kosbau at info@portlandcommunitygardens.org or David Sexton at 503-452-7538.

8 Book sale: Admit it; you can always use a few more books. The Mittleman Jewish Community Center will hold a used book sale Sunday, March 8 through Tuesday March 10 at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, 6651 SW Capitol Hwy.

The value of the local paper: In 2009, American writer Clay Shirky predicted that "every town in this country of 500,000 people or less" was likely to sink into "casual, endemic, civic corruption" fostered by the decline of local newspapers. How does this prediction stack up against what is actually happening nationwide and here in Oregon? Come hear journalist Michael Andersen explore why information is changing, who's winning, who's losing, and what the future holds for local news. Sunday March 8, 2:00 p.m. at the Central Library, 801 SW 10th Ave. Free.

14 Nashville singer-songwriter Buddy Mondlock and Texas-based bassist, Mike Lindauer perform in concert. Mondlock's songs have been



"Hairspray," the Broadway musical, is where 1960s-era teenagers fight bigotry and cookie-cutter conformity to make the world a better place. This 2007 adaption of John Waters' 1988 film features a cast and crew of 100, and 20 dance numbers. Performances begin at 7 p.m. on Friday March 6 for a six-day run at Portland Community College's Sylvania campus (performing arts center). Tickets are \$10 general admission, or \$5 for groups of 12 or more, and are available in advance at the PCC Sylvania Bookstore or at the door. For more information call 971-722-4323.

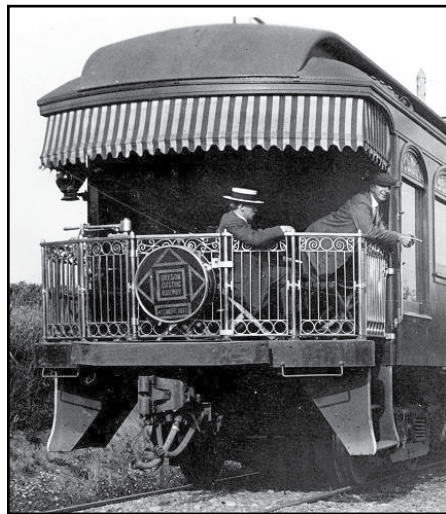
recorded by the likes of Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary. Saturday, March 14 at 7:00 pm at O'Connor's Vault, 7850 SW Capitol Hwy. Tickets are \$12 in advance. For more information, contact Matt Miner at 503-484-8196.

17 Tax talk: Have some questions about your taxes? H&R Block will offer general tax advice and answer tax related questions. Tues., March 17, 6:30 - 7:30 pm at the Capitol Hill Library, 10723 SW Capitol Hwy. Registration is required; register online, in the library or by calling 503-988-5234.

24 Life in Madagascar: Corie Hinton will share her experiences living and working in Madagascar as a

Peace Corps volunteer with a talk, slideshow and an exhibit of her own paintings about the country. Prints of her work will also be available for purchase. Tues., March 24, 7:00 pm at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center, 6651 SW Capitol Hwy. It's free and open to everyone.

31 The man behind the store: Fred G. Meyer changed the way we shopped when he opened his grocery stores and supermarkets. Learn about his life and the stories behind this retailer on Tuesday, March 31, at 6:30 pm at the Capitol Hill Library, 10723 SW Capitol Hwy. The presentation is based on Fred Leeson's book, *My-Te-Fine Merchant: Fred Meyer's Retail Revolution*. Free.



Author Richard Thompson will give an illustrated presentation based on his book on the history of the Willamette Valley interurbans in the early 20th Century. Long before modern light rail transit, electric trains provided Portland and beyond with reliable, elegant transportation. His one-hour talk takes place Tuesday, March 17 at 7:00 p.m. at the Garden Home Community Library, 7475 SW Oleson Rd. (Above, Oregon Electric Railway stops at Fulton Park circa 1912. Photo courtesy of pdxhistory.com)

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Can Food Front survive New Seasons competition with proper planning?

By Janet Goetze
The Southwest Portland Post

Food Front has a new water heater, employees are gaining new work guidelines and owners of the cooperative grocery are getting monthly updates of the changes a national organization is bringing to the Hillsdale and Thurman Street stores.

Food Front's board called in the National Co-op Grocers, an organization formed 15 years ago by cooperatives, to help the two stores survive the arrival of a New Seasons Market in Northwest Portland in late summer.

Rumors have circulated that the Hillsdale store would close, but C.E. Pugh, the chief operating officer of the national group, called those "a Portlandia myth."

Instead, an assessment team is working with Food Front to strengthen the Hillsdale Town Center store to increase sales while the flagship store at 2375 NW Thurman Street prepares for a potential 20 percent sales drop later this year.

New Seasons Market's new store will be at Northwest 21st Avenue and Raleigh Street, only a few blocks from the Food Front flagship.

The locally owned New Seasons is potentially stiff competition because it specializes in the local and organic foods that are the mainstays of cooperative groceries.

Competition also comes from national grocers that have captured about 40 percent of the local, organic market across the country in recent years, said Pugh.

Food Front can survive with careful planning, Pugh said. "Our plan is dependent on leveraging the financial contributions of that (Hillsdale) store," said Pugh.

The national organization has sent an assessment team to Portland along with development advisor Peg Nolan,

who said she expects to work with Food Front through the New Seasons opening.

Nolan is working with Holly Jarvis, Food Front's general manager, and other staff members to make lists of equipment to replace and items to help build sales.

They are drawing a new staff organizational chart for clear expectations and accountability, Nolan said. If staff members leave, they may not be immediately replaced but, she said, "We are making sure that our labor matches the need."

Weekly sales programs are being developed to be "top-notch and attractive" for owners, Nolan said.

The staff is receiving a newsletter every other week in an effort to keep communication clear within the organization. Owners, as co-op members are called, receive a monthly e-mail newsletter.

Pugh said previous employment policies were "mushy" but improvements, along with better communication, should reduce employee turnover, which has been a drain on the Hillsdale store.

In addition, Nolan is working with Food Front managers to develop a tight, three-year budget to submit to the board before its fiscal year begins April 1, Pugh said.

Many co-op owners have said they weren't aware of employee complaints until they read about them in local newspapers, which also speculated on the Hillsdale store's survival.

"The people working there have always been pretty darn friendly," said Michael Reunert.

Caroline Skinner, a co-op member since 1978, said she was surprised to read about dissatisfaction among staff members.

"This came out of left field," she said. "I never heard any complaints."

Mike Roach, co-owner of Paloma Clothing in the Hillsdale Town Center, said he has confidence that the national



In a publicity photo, a chocolate tasting takes place at Food Front in Hillsdale.

organization will help Food Front make needed improvements.

Roach, who also is president of the Hillsdale Business & Professional Association, said he supports the coop model because of the impact it can have on the local economy.

"Up to three times more of your money stays in the local economy when you shop at a food co-op that deals only locally," he said.

One reason is because all the co-op's business and support services are

acquired locally, he said.

In addition, Roach said, "Food Front is in a unique position of supporting small and emerging farms. . . A farmer of almost any size can supply a store like Food Front but not a New Seasons."

With a large percentage of farmers reaching retirement age and beyond, Roach said, "Food Front is an incubator, in a way, for this next generation of small farmers that are going to feed us. I think that's a pretty compelling reason to support it."

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